Professor Ioannis Pallikaris

Rector of the University of Crete

Dear Dr. Pallikaris,

It is with great pleasure and honor that I write this letter in support of the extraordinary work done at the Vardinoyannion Eye Institute of Crete and in particular the efforts and accomplishments of Dr. Ioannis Pallikaris.

I was first introduced to VEIC about 1994 when one of my professors at the time, the world renowned Dr. Stephen Trokel asked me to visit Crete and learn about a new technique that Dr. Pallikaris was developing. At that time, I had not heard of Dr. Pallikaris. As a Greek American, I wasn’t even sure of the state of Ophthalmology in Greece. However, I was totally impressed by what I saw at the VEIC , the research and clinical programs in place and the dedication of the associates and employees at the VEIC which were obviously spurred on and encouraged by the illustrious personality and hard work of Dr. Pallikaris.

The new technique of LASIK which I learned about during that early visit, not only revolutionized Ophthalmology but has had a ripple effect on all of medicine. Furthermore, this innovation from Greece (one of many as I was to find out through the years) has positively affected the visual outcome of countless individuals throughout the world (hundreds of thousands if not over a million). The development of this technique was researched scientifically with histopathology and a physiologic understanding far surpassing other techniques in development at the time

As a Greek American I was not only surprised by the high quality of work done in Crete but also very proud. I returned to Columbia University where at the time I was a young faculty member and presented the extremely strong impressions and scientific results that Dr. Pallikaris was willing to share with the world. It was well received and since then there has an explosion of continued ideas and technologies from the Vardinoyannion Eye Institute.

Over the ensuing years, I have had the opportunity to visit many parts of Greece on multiple occasions as a lecturer and participant in meetings as well as revisiting the VEIC all organized by Dr. Pallikaris. LASIK was the beginning of his skyrocketing career of new ideas, development and the best that Greece has to offer. I no longer just thought of Greece as a sleepy place to have a great vacation, but rather one of great thinkers like Dr. Pallikaris. Because of his efforts, Greece now deservedly commands the respect of ophthalmologists from around the world.

However, the most impressive aspect of my many interactions with VEIC and in particular with Dr. Pallikaris, was the extraordinary man. He is an innovator, a mentor, a scientist, an organizer and a true leader. His list of publications are extensive, but most importantly they are meaningful and have often laid the groundwork for even broader applications

In addition to the scientific innovations, Dr. Pallikaris has organized several meetings to impart knowledge and comaradie amongst Cornea and Retina subspecialists around the world. As well as the Summer School in Visual Optics, these meetings have brought leaders of world Ophthalmology together and have established Greece, and in particular the VEIC as a center of excellence and innovation. Greek ophthalmologists have been exposed to leaders in the field and these leaders that have met the Greek doctors have identified with them as true colleagues and as a result, the level ophthalmic care to the citizens of Greece as well as its ophthalmic academics have attained and maintained a high level of excellence in tune with the standards of the world community.

 Dr. Pallikaris has personally and deservedly received many of the most prestigious international awards of recognition for his efforts of and achievements. He is well known and respected by colleagues worldwide. In addition, he has held numerous international positions of leadership on various committees and organizations.

It is indeed an honor to know and have had the opportunity to professionally interact with Dr. Pallikaris. He is amongst the best that Greece has to offer and has truly put Greece “on the map”.  In the Ophthalmology world Greece is synonymous with the truly exceptional efforts and innovations of Dr. Pallikaris, his associates and the VEIC.

                                                                Sincerely,

                                                                George J. Florakis, MD

                                                                Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology

                                                                Columbia University

                                                                New York, New York